My Tall Tale

I am sure you folks want to hear a little bit about my life. Let me start by telling you that I come from a different time, nothing like life is these days. Times back when were much more simple than they are today. I was born in a tiny ole’ shack in Sevierville, TN. You just wouldn’t believe it. It is a wonder I even lived. I was born is the coldest March in history. I swear the temperature was barley above freezing. To beat it all, the house my family lived in was a little ole’ thing and only heated by a small coal stove. Needless to say, we sure was cold. Of course I don’t remember way back then but you can imagine the experience. My momma was working in the kitchen preparing a meal for a homecoming a church when she went into labor with me. She was a tough one, so she went to the homecoming anyway. By the time that thing was over she was a hurtin’. Papa got her back to the house just in time. He tried to summon the midwife, but there was no way she would have made it in time. Before Papa could make a holler I was comin. He slapped on his working gloves and caught me as I was born. As soon as I was born, I was a screamer. I sure wanted everyone to know I was there. Neighbors said they could hear me a hollerin all the way across the mountain. When I was not a happy camper everyone knew it. I was so advanced when I was born that I skipped the nursing stage entirely. I went straight to real food. Mama started feeding me beans and cornbread just a few days after I was born. I was so strong because of this. I started helping Papa in the barn at just two years old. I worked everyday with Papa in the rain or shine until I was old enough to go to school. School was not for me, I knew more than the teachers did. The only reason I went was to get out of the house for a while and look at the lovely ladies. I just wasn’t your average youngin. I was teachin myself how to figure out business situations while the other kids were learnin readin, writin, and rithmetic. I stayed as long as I could stand it. I was dreamin of becoming a businessman. I decided that I had all the education I needed at age 14. Man, I sure was a smart youngin. I still am super smart today. I quit school when I was 14 and left home to work in the coal mines. Coal mining was just a job I took to save money in order to start my own chain of grocery stores. I left home with only the clothes on my back. I didn’t have a car or nothing so I had to make my way to Kentucky on foot. I traveled many a weary mile through the woods with no shoes, shelter, or food. Being the tough young man that I was, it was nothing. I once killed a bear on the journey with my own two hands. I kept the meat from the bear in a sack and ate on it for a few days. As far as shelter goes, I cut down some trees with a small old hatchet I found in the woods. Then, I found some clay mud to use as a binder and built a collapsible log cabin. I built this cabin with traveling in mind. It had walls that collapsed and folded up into a backpack. Could you believe I did all that at age 14? Remember, I was really advanced. I finally made it to the coal mines where the immediately gave me a job because of the ordeal that I had been through to get there. They wanted to pay me a very small amount but because I was a great negotiator they ended up paying me triple what they originally offered. A higher amount than any other paid worker in the coal mines. The coal mine work was great and the pay was even better. I saved and saved until I had a massive amount of money. I had so much money and no where to keep it, so I built a steel safe with my own two hands and buried it in a secret cave in the woods. I was the only person who knew about the cave, and don’t ask me where it was located because if I tell you I will have to kill you. Once I had a massive heap of money I decided to tell my boss that I was leaving to move on to bigger and better things. However, my life was never boring. On my last day working in the coal mine, the whole dang thing collapsed. I think it was sad that I was leaving, you know, that mine had a mind of its own. That was a rough day. I had my work cut out for me. No one else had the will to survive down there so I had to do it for them. I mustered up some strength and lifted that whole mine by my lonesome. Everyone was able to climb out in a timely matter before my strength was pushed to the limit. The only person who didn’t make it was the little canary that we used as an alarm. Overall, the rescue was a success. My next adventure was my goal, my very own chain of grocery store. Back in my time, this was the best way to be a businessman and money maker. Needless to say, I am good at being a businessman. I made my way from Kentucky to Tennessee carrying my steel safe full of money on my back. I am a firm believer in cash so I found a buddy who was a builder, and counted out a ton of money in cash for him to build me a grocery store. He built me the most beautiful grocery store in Knoxville, TN. Just one store wasn’t good enough. I decided I needed more. I traveled all over Tennessee to find the perfect locations for my stores. I ended up with 27 stores which brought in six million dollars a year. I was one wealthy man, but I was wealthy because I am stingy and smart with my money. I still needed more. I started my biggest adventure yet, my Farm and Home Hour. I am the most ambitious man I know so I had to make my face known and what better way to advertise my stores. This was the darned smartest idea I ever did have. Once the show started the sales in my stores jumped straight to the moon, no really. My sales document was so long I once measured it and it was the length from the earth to the moon. After the show had been aired on WROL-TV I thought it needed something more. I remembered this family I knew from back home who had a daughter with a voice that would make you think you were a hearin angels. I thought it would be a darn good idea to have her come sing on my show. I knew she would take off like a rocket, and maybe even make me some more money. She was little Dolly Parton. She came to sing on The Farm and Home Hour when she was ten years old. Boy was I right, as always. My viewers loved her and lucky for me my profits began to rise. She kept coming back for more. She became a right pretty young lady and made a name for herself. My show was boomin and I loved every minute of it. Do you believe I even made the tv station famous. WROL kept growin and growin and turned into the tv station you young folks watch today, WATE. My fame, good looks and smarts led to the next major aspect of my life. I made my way into politics. I was elected major of Knoxville in 1946. This was not a big surprise to me because I find a way to always get what I want. Some people stood in the way of that, those darn politicians. Despite my smarts and good looks after a few weeks those darned men kicked me out. I was mad as hornet. I managed to keep my foot in the door and I showed those men who was boss. I got into a heated debate with a fellow politician one day. He was trying to raise property taxes and the stingy man that I am strongly opposed. My opponent was a tiny little feller so I had no problem dealing with him. He stood up during the fuss to say something to me and I pulled back my big strong arm and punched him right in the face. I punched him so hard that his head spun all the way around on his shoulders three times. The poor guy, he had to fetch a ride to the hospital and they had to untangle the vertebrae in his neck from his head spinning around so much. I didn’t feel bad; he should have known not to mess with my property. It brought me a little more fame which was nice. I big picture of the punch was shown in many different newspapers, so everyone saw how strong I was. Overall, it was a good experience. I eventually made it on the city council after the fire had calmed from the punch. I was a hit among the working class and farmers. This kept me busy and brought me more fame. I eventually got bored with the whole thing so I retired in 1971. Now that I am an old fart, I spend most of my time lollygagging around at The Museum of Appalachia with my old buddy John Rice Irwin. He is one of the only people who think I am a right good man and that’s ok with me. I have one of the most interesting life stories of any man I know, and remember every bit of it is completely true.